

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1. A lancing device comprising:  
a compact housing;  
a lancet holder for holding a lancet and mounted for back and forth movement along a lancing stroke path within the housing; and  
a drive mechanism comprising at least one off-axis spring coupled to the lancet holder, the at least one off-axis spring being positioned laterally offset from the lancing stroke path of the lancet holder.
2. The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein the compact housing has a width comparable to the length of the housing.
3. The lancing device of Claim 1, further comprising a trigger to trigger the lancing stroke.
4. The lancing device of Claim 3, wherein the lancet holder is barbed to hold the lancet holder in a ready position, ready for triggering.
5. The lancing device of Claim 4, wherein the barbed lancet holder comprises compression arms each having at least one chamfered barb, and wherein the trigger engages the chamfered barbs to trigger the lancing stroke.
6. The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein the at least one spring comprises a drive spring for driving the lancet holder along the lancing stroke and an opposing return

spring for returning the lancet holder.

7. The lancing device as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the compact housing is about twice as long as a lancet used therein.

8. A lancing device, comprising:

a compact housing having a length and a width, wherein the length of the housing is roughly the same as the width of the housing;

a drive mechanism within the housing for driving a lancet along a pre-defined path, the drive mechanism comprising:

a carrier for securely holding the lancet;

a first spring for urging the lancet from an initial position into an extended position wherein a portion of the lancet protrudes out of the compact housing; and

a second spring for retracting the lancet back into the housing.

9. The lancing device of Claim 8, and further comprising a trigger for triggering the drive mechanism.

10. The lancing device of Claim 8, wherein the springs are positioned laterally offset from the pre-defined path.

11. The lancing device of Claim 8, wherein the length of the housing is between about two and four times the length of the lancet used therein.

12. A lancing device, comprising:

a compact, non-elongated housing;

a drive mechanism for movably supporting a lancet along a lancing stroke;  
a trigger for triggering the drive mechanism; and

wherein the housing has a length of no more than about four times as long as the length of the lancet used therein.

13. The housing of Claim 12, wherein the housing is about twice as long as the lancet.

14. The lancing device of Claim 12, wherein the housing has a width roughly equal to its length.

15. The lancing device of Claim 12, wherein the housing is puck-like.

16. The lancing device of Claim 12, wherein the drive mechanism includes off-axis springs for urging the lancet back and forth along the lancing stroke, the off-axis springs being laterally offset from the lancing stroke.

17. A method of collecting a sample of fluid, comprising:  
inserting a lancet into a carrier of a multi-use sampling device;  
aligning an opening of the device at a site to be lanced;  
pressing an activating button having a post for contacting a chamfered barb of the carrier to release the carrier; and  
collecting a sample of fluid.

18. The method of Claim 17, wherein the step of inserting a lancet into a carrier further includes pushing the lancet towards the rear of the device until the chamfered barb of the carrier locks into a ready position.